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For Immediate Release  
September 18, 2002

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## **STATE REOPENS SOUTH SHORE'S MOST PRODUCTIVE SHELLFISH AREAS**

*Announces more funding to make harbor even cleaner*

KINGSTON – Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, today joined state and local officials and shellfish diggers on Gray's Beach to celebrate the reopening of the most productive shellfish area between Boston and the Cape Cod Canal.

The reopening of more than 1,800 acres of shellfish habitat, portions of which have been closed since the 1920's, is the result of more than \$55 million in coastal pollution reduction investments over the last four years by the state environmental agencies under the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the communities of Kingston, Plymouth and Duxbury. This coordinated effort targeted sewage from homes, businesses and boats, as well as polluted storm water.

"The \$56 million investment by Massachusetts taxpayers in the form of sewage treatment plant upgrades, storm water remediation work and support for pump out facilities for boat waste water has had the intended effect of making this harbor cleaner than it has been in more than 75 years," said Secretary Durand. "In addition to the obvious benefits to the ecosystem, the investment will also help the regional economy as this area will once again be a focal point for recreational and professional shellfish harvesters."

"The opening of Kingston Bay and Plymouth Outer Harbor to shellfishing is due to the dedication of the towns of Duxbury, Kingston, and Plymouth, and the willingness of town residents to fund massive improvements to the sewer and storm drain systems," said David Peters, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement. "I would also like to recognize the Division of Marine Fisheries, the agency that physically monitors the entire coastline of Massachusetts and that identified pollution sources in the three towns, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management and the Department of Environmental Protection, who were partners with DMF and the towns in this effort and provided funds for the sewer and storm water projects."

The Plymouth Outer Harbor area contains 1,013 acres of shellfish beds, about 855 acres on the Plymouth side and 158 acres on the Duxbury side. This area will be open to harvest year round without

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restriction. The Kingston Bay area, open conditionally, contains about 800 acres, 500 acres on the Kingston side and 300 acres on the Duxbury side. The conditionally approved classification means that the Kingston Bay area will be open to shellfishing from May through October except when rains exceed three-tenths of an inch in a twenty-four hour period. The area will be closed to shellfishing for five days after such a rainfall and closed from November through April.

“This is the most productive shellfish area between Boston and the Cape Cod Canal, with an estimated standing crop of more than 100,000 bushels of soft shell clams, quahogs, littlenecks, and other shellfish,” said Paul Diodati, Director of the state Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). “This opening will take pressure off the shellfish area that is presently open, and will benefit about 30 commercial diggers and hundreds of people who are expected to take up recreational shellfishing, providing both a food source and a fun family activity.”

At the ceremony at Gray’s Beach, officials from the state Division of Marine Fisheries and the towns of Kingston and Duxbury signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding management responsibilities in the conditionally approved shellfish area.

Also, the state Office of Coastal Zone Management presented a check for \$38,700 to the town of Plymouth for the assessment and development of engineering plans to mitigate storm water pollution of Plymouth Harbor from the Samoset Street outfall. CZM also awarded \$170,000 to the town of Bourne for storm water remediation in the Pocasset River at the ceremony.

“These awards represent the continuing effort by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Coastal Zone Management to make sure the progress we have made in cleaning up these coastal areas continues,” said Secretary Durand.

Since 1999, the Department of Environmental Protection has provided \$55.2 million in sewage treatment upgrades through low or no interest loans from the State Revolving Fund. This includes \$26 million for sewage plant upgrades in Kingston in 1999, \$28 million to Plymouth for sewage plant upgrades in 2000, \$600,000 to Kingston homeowners through DEP’s Community Septic Management Program to help homeowners tie in to the Kingston plant, and \$600,000 to help the Duxbury business district upgrade its septic system.

In the last three years, Coastal Zone Management and the state Department of Environmental Protection have awarded almost \$500,000 in grants to the towns of Plymouth, Kingston, and Duxbury to assess sources of coastal pollution and design and construct storm water remediation systems. Also, the state Division of Marine Fisheries and Coastal Zone Management have awarded about \$160,000 in boat septic waste disposal support through boat-based and stationary sewage pumpout facilities in the three towns.

The first shellfish closures in Kingston Bay and Plymouth Outer Harbor were made in 1926 when the western side of the bay and harbor were closed because of pollution. Portions of Kingston Bay have been closed since that time while most of Kingston Bay has been closed to shellfishing since 1978. The Plymouth Outer Harbor area has been closed since 1996.

Officials in the three towns have already noticed a marked increase in shellfish license sales and expect to sell an additional 300 to 500 recreational licenses. Duxbury presently has more than 1,000 non-resident family recreational shellfish license holders and 30 commercial diggers. The reopening of the new areas should allow residents to utilize areas in their own town and take pressure off the resource while providing new opportunities for recreational and commercial diggers. With a standing crop of more than 100,000 bushels of clams and an estimated sustainable harvest of 10,000 bushels annually, the Division of Marine Fisheries estimates the retail value of the harvest at \$1.5 million annually.

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